

LEISURE SERVICES AND SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (LSSE)

Fiscal Year 2007

LSSE Commission

In FY 07, long-time LSSE Commission member Stanley Ziomek took the helm as chair of the LSSE Commission. Together with Peter Blier, Vice-Chair, and members James Patulak and Afranio Torres-Neto, the LSSE Commission offered invaluable leadership, guidance and support to LSSE throughout the year. Advocacy for the Department's annual budget during another difficult budget year, the continued construction of the Plum Brook Athletic Fields project, participation in the Comprehensive Planning Committee's Master Plan process and administrative oversight of the Cherry Hill Golf Course all emerged as important Department and Commission goals in FY 07.

LSSE Staff

In the fall of 2006, Carol Rogers was welcomed back to the LSSE staff as Arts and Education Program Director, replacing retired Program Director Steve Stoia. Carol Rogers had worked for LSSE twelve years in the past, in a similar position.

Ezzell Floranina, LSSE's long-time Special Needs Program Director, also departed in FY 07, after nine years of innovative work, to pursue her own nonprofit organization dedicated to inclusive arts programming. Ezzell's departure left a void in the Department, but one in which LSSE has resolved to improve through a Department reorganization.

An unfortunate staff departure also occurred with the resignation of LSSE's Aquatics Program Coordinator, Kristen Baffert, in June 2007. LSSE was notified of this resignation in the midst of the Town's debate whether or not to fund opening the War Memorial Pool, and amidst uncertainty about the opening of LSSE's Amherst Community Aquatics Center.

Annual Budget

For FY 08, the Town Manager called for Department-wide, across-the-board cuts. Drawing directly from LSSE's tax support, the Department and Commission's proposal to meet this goal included the following severe social services reductions: reducing program fee subsidies, eliminating some special needs assistance and proposing the closing of one outdoor pool (War Memorial Pool) and two wading pools. In response to these reduction proposals, LSSE Commissioners, staff and patrons presented clarifying and ardent evidence of LSSE's important social services mission and objectives.

Though a Town-wide budgetary override was attempted and the swimming and wading pools were included as part of the override menu, Amherst voters did not approve the May 1st override. In an attempt to abide by the consequences of the failed override, Town Meeting initially voted to close the War Memorial Pool and wading pools. Less than one week later, however, Town Meeting conducted a second lengthy and impassioned debate, reversing this decision and voting to keep the War Memorial Pool open for the 2007 summer season.

Capital Projects

Plum Brook Athletic Fields

The Plum Brook Athletic Field construction project continued to present itself as a challenging site, particularly during undesirable weather conditions. In July, construction work began anew after months of inactivity due to particularly relentless rainstorms the previous spring and early summer, which left a wet and unworkable site. Construction continued through mid-summer, fall and then, because of some mild weather, even into early winter (December). The site received final grading, irrigation lines were set, many of the plantings were installed and the parking lot was paved. By December the entire field was seeded, though some of the seeding had been finished late and would require additional attention in the warmer months.

Mild fall weather allowed for a partial grass and seedling field coverage before winter. In order to thoroughly protect the site and provide closure prior to winter, mulch hay was added to all fields. Some potentially vulnerable areas received sod, and additional erosion control measures were implemented. All steps were taken to safeguard the site and adjacent resource areas.

When spring arrived, a stronger and healthier stand of grass surfaced. Our project Environmental Compliance Monitor continued to make monthly site checks and reported that the site was stable and completely vegetated by June 2007.

Groff Park Restroom

In 2004, the Town of Amherst Department of Public Works (DPW) created a design and site plan for a new Groff Park restroom facility. In the fall of 2005, the Amherst DPW demolished the old restroom, and in the spring of 2007 the Amherst DPW began construction of the new facility. The plans for the facility included handicapped-accessible restrooms, a storage area and a concessions stand. As of June 2007, the facility was not yet open to the public; however, the end of the construction appeared to be in sight.

Cherry Hill Golf Course

On August 11, 2006, the Town Manager returned responsibility for the administration of the Cherry Hill Golf Course to LSSE, following a 17-year interval in which the Amherst Conservation Department had oversight responsibilities for Cherry Hill. LSSE Program Director Barbara Bilz was tapped to manage the course. Goals were set high and included reviewing and overhauling course operations in order to create renewed customer satisfaction and to establish a more financially successful base.

In late winter and early spring and in keeping with a pledge made to Town Meeting, the Town Manager decided to advertise a Request for Proposals (RFP) for others to operate the course. Two separate RFP's were let; however, the Town Manager determined that no successful bidders had emerged. By the beginning of May it was clear that LSSE would continue to administer the management of the course through FY 07 and into FY 08.

Dan Engstrom, former Golf Course Superintendent, was asked to lead the Cherry Hill Grounds Crew, but left his position in February of 2007. Left with a skeleton crew of two veteran part-

time turf employees, Barbara Bilz and staff succeeded in accomplishing a number of improvements by the end of June 2007.

Course Improvements

Grounds maintenance is the backbone of any golf course operation. The following improvements, made in FY 07, resulted in a course which could boast some of the best greens in Western Massachusetts and an overall enhanced playing experience:

- fairway improvements, reconfiguration of shrubs and trees on #7, opening up the view to the green
- tee boxes improved at holes 2, 4, 5
- drainage improvements on holes 1, 7
- bunker improvement over entire course
- removal of hazardous trees and unsightly debris
- deep tined fairways and tee boxes
- capital plan developed and implemented

With a strong grounds maintenance plan underway, Barbara Bilz next put her marketing, development and administrative skills to work to establish new clinics, tournaments, collaborations, and membership opportunities throughout FY 07.

The vision for a new Cherry Hill Golf Course was created with the long-range objective of providing a friendly and hospitable environment that would feel welcoming to all customers but especially to women, families, youth and individuals of diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Progress toward this objective was substantial and included the following milestones:

Clinics, Camps, Grants, Tournaments, Leagues

- first ever women's clinic – 75 participants
- first ever youth clinic – 20 participants
- B. Bontempo Junior Golf Camp added
- EXCEL youth golf camps
- LSSE youth golf day camps
- new tournaments in addition to existing tournaments
- "Sticks for Kids" grant awarded, providing for bags, clubs and equipment for youth development program
- 20% increase over 2006 in Women's League participation.

Clubhouse and General Improvements, Marketing and Concessions

- clubhouse facelift for family-friendly atmosphere
- customer service procedures, staff orientation/training, staff policy manual development, tournament and outing procedures and registration information formulated
- Cherry Hill Golf course website launched- www.cherryhillgolf.org
- promotional pamphlets and newsletter created and distributed widely
- radio, print and internet advertising schedule established and implemented
- Friends of Cherry Hill Advisory Board established
- new membership categories established and marketed: Associate Membership, Corporate Membership, etc.

- signature special events planned for wider year-round use of the course, including *Winterfest* and a Disc Golf tournament
- concessions operation handled in-house.

To promote the Cherry Hill Golf Course to an even wider audience, Barbara Bilz took advantage of Amherst's rich resources within the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass). Important collaborations were formed with the following entities:

- the UMass Stockbridge School to improve course improvements
- the UMass Conference Services for marketing purposes
- the UMass Hospitality and Tourism Department in an advisory capacity
- the UMass Professional Women's Network to offer special clinics to members.

Cherry Hill Golf Course Fiscal Achievements

- In-house concessions arrangements netted a \$5,337 surplus, an increase of \$4,837 over the previous year's contractual arrangement.
- In a year of change and uncertainty, the most compelling story about the Cherry Hill Golf Course was the good news announced at the end of the fiscal year. In June 2007, LSSE's financial projection was confirmed. Although the tax appropriated Cherry Hill budget had been exceeded, Cherry Hill's revenue also had been exceeded, and for the first time ever in the history of the Town course, revenue exceeded expenses.

LSSE Program Statistics	FY 07	FY 06
Aquatics		
Outdoor Pools- Lessons	573	550
Outdoor Pools Memberships	154	180
Indoor Pool – Lessons	511	628
Indoor Pool- Memberships	81	138
Total	1,319	1,496
Sports		
Youth Sports Camps	880	841
Youth Basketball	653	652
Youth Football	76	77
Adult Softball	32 teams	33 teams
Adult Volleyball	4 teams	4 teams
Skiing/Snowboarding	144	184
Ultimate	597	584
Sandlot Programs- Adult	741	216
Sandlot Programs- Youth	39	0
Girls Softball	120	106
Youth Soccer	1,504	1,440
Total	4,790	4,137

	FY 07	FY 06
Vacation and Day Camps		
Outdoor Challenge	156	172
Early Adventures	201	226
Adventure Playground	614	443
Vacation Camps	89	90
Prime Time	78	66
Total	1,138	997
Performing Arts		
Community Theater Tickets	4,546	4,253
Valley Light Opera Tickets	1,829	1,824
Total	6,375	6,077
Youth Classes		
Instructional	288	166
Visual Arts	112	132
Total	400	298
Adult Education		
Hobbies	66	73
Health	265	219
Sports	12	23
Performing Arts	236	261
Personal Development	350	106
Visual Arts	157	171
Total	1,086	853
Special Events		
Halloween	76	78
July 4 th	20,000	20,000
Total	20,076	20,078
Pavilion Rentals	86	49
Special Needs		
Registrants	237	206
Fee Subsidies – Households	187	186
Fee Subsidies – Individuals	567	545

Linda Chalfant, Director